

COBBETT'S ADVICE TO YOUNG MEN.

LETTER I.—TO A YOUTH.

12. You are now arrived at that age which the law thinks sufficient to make an oath, taken by you, valid in a court of law. Let us suppose from fourteen to nearly twenty; and, reserving, for a future occasion, my remarks on your duty towards parents, let me here offer you my advice as to the means likely to contribute largely towards making you a happy man, useful to all about you, and an honour to those from whom you sprang.

13. Start, I beseech you, with a conviction firmly fixed on your mind, that you have no right to live in this world; that, being of hale body and sound mind, you have *no right* to any earthly existence, without doing *work* of some sort or other, unless you have ample fortune whereon to live clear of debt; and, that even in that case, you have no right to breed children, to be kept by others, or to be exposed to the chance of being so kept. Start with this conviction thoroughly implanted on your mind. To wish to live on the labour of others is, besides the folly of it, to contemplate a *fraud* at the least, and, under certain circumstances, to meditate oppression and robbery.

14. I suppose you in the middle rank of life. Happiness ought to be your great object, and it is to be found only in *independence*. Turn your back on Whitehall and on Somerset-House; leave the Customs and Excise to the feeble and low-minded; look not for success to favour, to partiality, to friendship, or to what is called *interest*; write it on your heart, that you will depend solely on your own merit and your own exertions. Think not, neither, of any of those situations where gaudy habiliments and sounding titles poorly disguise from the eyes of good sense the mortifications and the heart-ache of slaves. Answer me not by saying, that these situations "*must be filled by somebody*;" for, if I were to admit the truth of the proposition,